



# Review of Community Efforts

Field Guide 2nd Edition

For Implementation of RCW 70.190.110 Program Review

## Executive Summary

Washington State Family Policy Council  
Community Public Health and Safety Networks

# Executive Summary

## Washington State Family Policy Council

The Family Policy Council is a family-community-state partnership that involves communities in reducing major social problems: child abuse and neglect, youth substance abuse, violence, suicide, dropping out of school, teen pregnancy/male parentage, and domestic violence. The partnership includes a council of elected and appointed state officials and 36 Community Public Health and Safety Networks, which are quasi-governmental special purpose entities throughout Washington.

The Family Policy Council and Community Networks were formed to solve problems. Local Networks develop, implement, and evaluate comprehensive and strategic plans for reducing the rates of major social problems. Community Networks improve program and policy effectiveness, stretch public dollars with volunteer time and fund raising, and review state program effectiveness in the context of local values and conditions using a process the Family Policy Council calls “Review of Community Efforts.” (RCW 70.190.110)

## Review of Community Efforts, Definition

Review of Community Efforts is an evaluative process that uses parent and citizen perspective, professional expertise and data to assess effectiveness of, and potential improvements to, services and other efforts affecting individuals, families, and/or communities. The process demonstrates consideration of: local values and strengths, key questions derived from statute, at least one state or federally funded program, and Family Policy Council guidance.

## Review Builds Local and State Improvements

Review of Community Efforts provides a process to make sure that the efforts of local people, together with local regulations, policy and other factors, combine with state and federally funded services to extend their effectiveness. Using this process, communities may:

1. Make improvements to local strategies and actions, and build the capacity of the community to solve interrelated social problems;
2. Invite professionals, including state agency representatives, to make adjustments in the way they work, or the work they do; and/or
3. Recommend more flexibility in the use of state and/or federal funds or law.

The Review process can also increase social capital in a community, mobilize adults to help children thrive, identify system barriers to effective strategy, and improve the level of trust and cooperation among professionals, customers, residents, and officials. State agencies may also invite a Review.

Decision-making about the focus for Review occurs in a community. The Review focus should help reveal system dynamics, invite discussion about how to improve the use of existing resources, ignite local passion for action, and build upon the strength of partnership(s). For example, one community reviewed how Head Start, Early Childhood Education Assistance Program, community efforts to help young families, and school programs could increase the number of children entering school ready to learn. Another focused on improving Juvenile Court relationships with families and court management processes in order to reduce future crime.

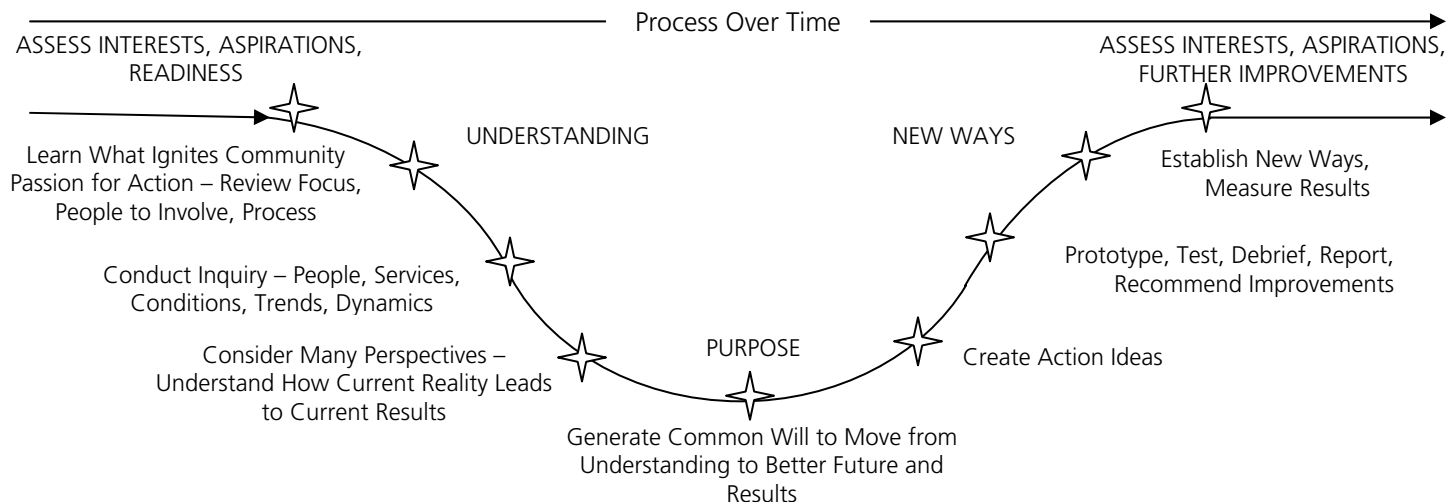
## Review May Focus on One or More of At Least Three System Issues

Networks have a unique role that is separate from, and complementary to, an agency or service manager's role. The breadth of Network interests— seven interrelated social problems plus their antecedents and effects – supports evaluation of the system of programs and efforts affecting individuals, families, and communities. A system means a grouping of parts that operate together for common purpose. When most effective, system results are greater than the sum of program results within the system. Review may focus on one or more of at least three system issues:

1. *Strategic Problem Solving* – To what degree are social and family support, services, programs and other formal mechanisms complementary, coordinated, and able to create change at critical times? For example, how well do parental support, education and treatment programs, and court sanctions combine to prevent adjudicated youth from committing another crime?
2. *Development of Thriving* – To what degree do the dynamics of a system of services and local efforts address the changing needs of people over time? For example, how well do prenatal care, family support, early childhood education and other strategies effectively work together to prevent a cascade of problems as children develop from birth to age eight?
3. *Program Fit With Community Resources* – To what degree do management practices, linkages to other services, and data analysis improve results from a particular service/effort? For example, child care services and a vocational culinary program could be linked to a the research-proven parent education program so that parents in the educational program have child care and a meal. Would this result in a higher participation and completion rate, and thereby improve the results of the program?

## Review Process Invites Learning, Improvement

The Review process begins with understanding community interests and aspirations for families and children. Each stage builds upon earlier readiness, conversation and agreement. While the process is generally sequential, issues may arise that return the work to earlier stages, such as data analysis and perspectives gathering. It is important not to jump to designing, testing or making recommendations for major policy change before considering many perspectives and finding common will for improvement.



## Review Must Consider Key Questions

1. What is the status of families, children and the community relating to the Review focus – rates of problem behavior(s), causes and predictors of problem behavior(s), pathways for resilience or escalation of problems?
2. How are the services and community efforts conducted with regard to the population/issue of concern?
3. To what degree are services integrated and coordinated with other efforts designed to achieve similar results, prevent the same problem or serve a similar population?
4. How flexible and relevant are the resources currently applied to achieve desired results?
5. To what degree do services and community efforts build, nurture, honor and use relationships as a strategy for success?
6. To what extent is this service, or this constellation of services and other efforts, the best fit for the community, its needs and priorities?
7. To what extent is the service or effort able to optimize positive results? Are the needed management tools in place to support learning, improvement, responsiveness?
8. What options are available to address specific barriers to success or to make improvements? Is decategorization of funds, or local exception to rule, an appropriate or necessary step toward improvement?

## Review is a Unique Mandate that Supports Local System Improvements

RCW 70.190 requires the Family Policy Council and Community Networks to review state and federally funded programming each year. Review authority extends to the entire spectrum of state and federally funded programs affecting individual, family and community social problems. Review is not limited to a certain list of programs. During a Review, communities must consider whether or not decategorization of funds, local exception to rule, and/or local management of a program(s), would be an appropriate or necessary step toward reducing the rates of major social problems.

When decategorization and/or local management is recommended, the Network develops a specific proposal for a pilot project to be submitted to the Family Policy Council. The proposal must include an implementation plan that identifies the local entity with capacity to manage the decategorized funds or local exception to rules and recommends a results-focused evaluation plan. The proposal must also include specific arguments about:

- *Effectiveness* – How does categorization hinder, and how might decategorization improve, effectiveness?
- *Community Goals* – How does decategorization advance the goals in the community strategic plan and the goal of reducing major social problems?
- *Follow-up, Community Support, Integration and Coordination* – How might the implementation of the proposed pilot project improve follow-up supports for customers, result in greater community support for programs and results, and/or improve integration and coordination of services and other related efforts?

Based on the Network findings, conclusions and pilot project proposal, the Family Policy Council determines whether the Review and recommendations are complete and compelling, and therefore will be forwarded to the affected agency, Governor and/or Legislature.

Past experience indicates that, if forwarded to the Legislature and Governor, a recommended pilot decategorization project would be considered via the usual budget and policy development process in a Legislative session. One such pilot project has been approved for two consecutive biennia – for the Pierce County Juvenile Court, based on a Tacoma Urban Network Review. The Network provides the court with technical assistance during the pilot project. The Pierce County Juvenile Court pilot project was authorized by the Legislature and Governor in a budget proviso.

In the event that changes to federal funds or rule are recommended, RCW 70.190 requires the Family Policy Council to “assist the Governor in applying to the federal government for waivers of the federal restrictions,” and “to assist the Governor in coordinating efforts to make any changes in federal law necessary to meet the purpose and intent” of the law.

## Community Networks Are a Voice for the Community as a Whole

Community Networks involve community residents and community-based professionals from many fields, including: justice, education, public health, parks and recreation, transportation, social service, local government, business and faith. The breadth of knowledge, expertise, and influence within the community provides a strong foundation for collaborative decisions about improving the system of support and care for families and children.

Authority for Review acknowledges the importance of the citizens of Washington – providing them with a stronger voice for, and greater participation in, solving major social problems. The Family Policy Council requires that Review be conducted by and for the community, including all those who have an interest in, and may be affected by, issues and programs within the scope of the Review. Recommendations for changes to state policy or programs must be vested with the community as a whole. The Community Network is the local entity that formally conveys community recommendations to the Family Policy Council.

## The Power and Promise of Review

Local results from Reviews include:

- Quality preschool programs, adapted to suit the academic needs of children entering each school, are now offered by all school districts in the county. Cost sharing helps school districts, Head Start, and ECEAP work together to help more families and improve early succeed in school.
- Family stability, family ability to contribute to a healthier community, and child out of home placement rates have improved because of collaborative decision-making with schools, service providers, drug and alcohol prevention, public health, business and local residents.
- Treatment for traumatized children in the juvenile court system is improved. While holding youth accountable for their crimes, the court improved methods for matching the needs of youth with a history of abuse or domestic violence with more effective treatment for those youth.